Claimed:

1. A method of preparing flat articles for sorting, comprising:

receiving a bundle of flat items to be sorted, the bundle being wrapped with a flexible film such that the film forms an enclosed package of flat items;

placing the bundles on a substantially horizontal work surface;

moving the bundle adjacent at least one film slitter, the film slitter being activated when the bundle is moved adjacent the film slitter;

removing the cut film from the flat items; and

stacking the unbundled flat items in a cartridge.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the bundle is packaged using flexible straps, the method further comprising removing the straps with a retractable clipper mounted adjacent the work surface.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein a first film slitteris positioned at 90^0 relative to a second film slitterand wherein the method further comprises simultaneously cutting the film on at least two sides of the bundle.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the film slitteris a hot air slitter, the method comprising using heated air to cut the film from the bundle.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the substantially horizontal work surface is a substantially frictionless surface.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the cartridge is supported in a self-adjusting lift, the lift adjusting the elevation of the cartridge such that the top of the stack of flat items is maintained adjacent the work surface.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the film slitteris automatically activated when the bundle is positioned adjacent the film slitter.

8. An apparatus for preparing flat articles for sorting, comprising:

a substantially horizontal work surface for supporting a bundle of flat articles to be sorted, the bundle being wrapped in a flexible film such that the film forms a package of flat items;

a slitter mounted adjacent the table for slitting the film;

a switch for activating the film slitter;

means for disposing of film slit from the bundle;

means for slicing flexible bands secured around the bundle; and

a cartridge for receiving unbundled flat items.

9. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising a lift for supporting the unbundled flat items in the cartridge.

10. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising a self-adjusting lift for receiving the unbundled flat items, the lift adjusting the elevation of the cartridge such that the top of the stack of flat items is maintained adjacent the work surface.

11. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the horizontal work surface comprises a table with a substantially frictionless upper surface.

12. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the means for slicing flexible bands secured around the bundle comprises a retractable clipper mounted adjacent the work surface.

13. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the means for disposing of film slit from the bundle comprises a conveyor for transporting the film from the work surface.

14. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising a pair of hot air slitters configured to simultaneously slit film on adjacent sides of a bundle of flat items.

15. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising means for conveying bundles to the work surface.

16. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the means for conveying bundles to the work surface comprises an inclined ramp.

17. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the means for conveying bundles to the work surface comprises a conveyor.

18. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the sensor for sensing when a bundle is moved adjacent the hot air slitter comprises a contact switch, the contact switch automatically activating the slitter to slit the film when the bundle is positioned for slitting.

19. The apparatus of claim 14 further comprising a sensor for sensing when a bundle is moved adjacent the hot air slitter, the sensor activating the slitter to slit the film when the bundle is positioned for slitting.

20. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the cartridge comprises an end wall, bottom wall, and a stack support, the stack support, the stack support being configured to interlock with the bottom wall to secure the stack support in position.